

I imagined the gentlemen had been at Versailles, as I supposed Mr. G. would first have waited on M. de Vergennes, before he called on me. But finding in conversation that he had not, and that he expected me to introduce him, I immediately wrote to that minister, acquainting him that Mr. G. was arrived, and desired to know when his Excellency would think fit to receive him: and I sent an express with my letter. I then entered into conversation with him on the subject of his mission, Mr. Fox having referred me to him as being fully acquainted with his sentiments. He said that peace was really wished for by every body, if it could be obtained on reasonable terms; and as the idea of subjugating America was given up, and both France and America had thereby obtained what they had in view originally, it was hoped that there now remained no obstacle to a pacification. That England was willing to treat of a general peace with all the powers at war against her, and that the treaty should be at Paris. I did not press him much for farther particulars, supposing they were reserved for our interview with M. de Vergennes. The gentlemen did me the honour of staying dinner with me, on the supposition which I urged that my express might be back before we parted. This gave me an opportunity of a good deal of general conversation with Mr. Grenville, who appeared to me a sensible, judicious, intelligent, good-tempered, and well-instructed young man, answering well the character Mr. Fox had given me of him. They left me however about six o'clock, and my messenger did not return till near nine. He brought me the answer of M. le Comte de Vergennes, that he was glad to hear of Mr. Grenville's arrival, and would be ready to receive us to-morrow at half-past 10 or 11 o'clock. I immediately inclosed his note in one to Mr. Grenville, requesting him to be with me at Passy by eight, that we might have time to breakfast, before we set out. I have preserved no copy of these three last mentioned notes, or I should have inserted them, as I think that though they seem of almost too trifling a nature, they serve usefully sometimes to settle dates, authenticate facts, and show something of the turn and manner of thinking of the writers, on particular occasions. The answer I received was as follows:—

“ Mr. Grenville presents his compliments to Mr. Franklin, and will certainly do himself the honour of waiting upon Mr. Franklin to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock.

Rue de Richelieu, Wednesday Night.”

We set out accordingly the next morning in my coach from Passy, and arrived punctually at M. de Vergennes who received Mr. Grenville in the most cordial

manner, on account of the acquaintance and friendship that had formerly subsisted between his uncle and M. de Vergennes when they were ambassadors together at Constantinople. After some little agreeable conversation, Mr. Grenville presented his letters from Mr. Secretary Fox, and I think from the Duke of Richmond. When these were read the subject of peace was entered on. What my memory retains of the discourse amounts to little more than this, that after mutual declarations of the good disposition of the two Courts, Mr. Grenville having intimated that in case England gave America independence, France, it was expected, would restore the conquests she had made of British Islands, receiving back those of Miquelon and St. Pierre. And the original object of the war being obtained, it was supposed that France would be contented with that. The minister seemed to smile at the proposed exchange. America, says he, does not ask it of you; there is Mr. Franklin, he will answer you as to that point. To be sure, I said, we do not consider ourselves as under any necessity of bargaining for a thing that is our own, which we have bought at the expence of much blood and treasure, and which we are in possession of. As to our being satisfied with the original object of the war, continued he, look back to the conduct of your nation in former wars. In the last war, for example, what was the object? It was the disputed right to some waste lands on the Ohio, and the frontier of Nova Scotia; did you content yourselves with the recovery of those lands? No, you retained at the peace all Canada, all Louisiana, all Florida, Grenada, and other West India islands, the greatest part of Northern Fisheries; with all your conquests in Africa and the East Indies. Something being mentioned of its not being reasonable that a nation, after making an unprovoked and unsuccessful war upon its neighbours, should expect to sit down whole, and have every thing restored which she had lost in such a war, I think Mr. Grenville remarked that the war had been provoked by the encouragement given by France to the Americans to revolt. On which M. de Vergennes grew a little warm, and declared firmly, that the breach was made and our independence declared long before we received the least encouragement from France; and he defied the world to give the smallest proof of the contrary. There sits, says he, Mr. Franklin who knows the fact and can contradict me, if I do not speak the truth. He repeated to Mr. Grenville, what he had before said to Mr. Oswald, respecting the King's intention of treating fairly, and keeping faithfully the conventions he should enter into; of which disposition he should give at the treaty convincing proofs by the fidelity and exactitude with which he should observe his engagements with his present allies; and added that the points which the King had chiefly in view were

*justice and dignity*, these he could not depart from. He acquainted Mr. Grenville that he should immediately write to Spain, and Holland, communicate to those Courts what had passed, and report their answers; that in the mean time he hoped Mr. Grenville would find means of amusing himself agreeably, to which he should be glad to contribute, that he would communicate what had passed to the King, and he invited him to come again the next day.

On our return Mr. G. expressed himself as not quite satisfied with some part of M. de Vergennes' discourse, and was thoughtful. He told me, that he had brought two state messengers with him, and perhaps after he had had another interview with the minister, he might dispatch one of them to London: I then requested leave to answer by that opportunity the letters I had received from Lord Shelburne and Mr. Fox; and he kindly promised to acquaint me the time of the messenger's departure. He did not ask me to go with him the next day to Versailles, and I did not offer it.

The coming and going of these gentlemen was observed, and made much talk at Paris; and the Marquis de la Fayette having learned something of their business from the ministers, discoursed with me about it. Agreeable to the resolutions of Congress directing me to confer with him, and take his assistance in our affairs, I communicated to him what had passed. He told me that, during the treaty at Paris for the last peace, the Duke de Nivernois had been sent to reside in London, that this Court might through him state what was from time to time transacted in the light they thought best, to prevent misrepresentations and misunderstandings. That such an employ would be extremely agreeable to him on many accounts; that as he was now an American citizen, spoke both languages, and was well acquainted with our interests, he believed he might be useful in it; and that as peace was likely from appearances to take place, his return to America was perhaps not so immediately necessary. He then wished I would make him acquainted with Messrs. Oswald and Grenville, and for that end promised meeting them at breakfast with me, which I proposed to contrive if I could, and endeavour to engage them for Saturday.

Friday morning the 10th of May, I went to Paris and visited Mr. Oswald. I found him in the same friendly dispositions, and very desirous of doing good, and of seeing an end put to this ruinous war. But I got no farther light as to the sentiments of Lord S. respecting the terms. I told him the Marquis de la Fayette would breakfast with me to-morrow, and he, Mr. Oswald, might have some curiosity to see a person, who had in this war rendered himself so remarkable, I proposed

his doing me the same honour. He agreed to it cheerfully. I came home intending to write to Mr. Grenville, whom I supposed might stay and dine at Versailles, and therefore did not call on him. But he was returned, and I found the following note from him.

*Paris, May 10.*

Mr. Grenville presents his compliments to Mr. Franklin, he proposes sending a courier to England, at 10 o'clock this night, and will give him in charge any letters Mr. Franklin may wish to send by him.

I sat down immediately and wrote the two short letters following, to the Secretaries of State.

TO THE RIGHT HON. C. J. FOX, ESQ.  
*Secretary of State.*

SIR,

*Passy, May 10, 1782.*

I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me by Mr. Grenville, whom I find to be a very sensible, judicious, and amiable gentleman. The name I assure you does not with me lessen the regard that his excellent qualities inspire. I introduced him as soon as possible to M. de Vergennes; he will himself give you an account of his reception. I hope his coming may forward the blessed work of pacification, in which for the sake of humanity no time should be lost; no reasonable cause, as you observe, existing at present, for the continuance of this abominable war. Be assured of my endeavours to put an end to it. I am much flattered by the good opinion of a person whom I have long highly esteemed, and I hope it will not be lessened by my conduct in the affairs that have given rise to our correspondence. With great respect, I have the honour to be, Sir, &c. &c.

B. FRANKLIN.

TO LORD SHELBURNE.

MY LORD,

*Passy, May 10, 1782.*

I have received the honour of your Lordship's letter dated the 28th past, by Mr. Oswald, informing me that he is sent back to settle with me the preliminaries of time and place. Paris as the place, seemed to me yesterday to be agreed on between Mr. Grenville and M. de Vergennes, and it is perfectly agreeable to me. The time cannot well be settled 'till this Court has received answers from Madrid and the Hague, and until my colleagues are arrived, I expect